

# Water main repaired

## Boston may get OK to drink tap

By Liz Tsai  
STAFF REPORTER

For three days, residents of Boston and surrounding communities have been advised to boil their water following a major water main break Saturday morning. Cambridge residents are not affected because the city receives its water from a different source.

The end may be in sight. As of early Monday morning, the pipe is repaired and the water is being tested for quality. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority hopes that everything will return to normal “within a day or two” spokesman Ria Convery told *The Tech* yesterday, though “we don’t want to set expectations, that would be irresponsible.” Last night, Massachusetts Governor Deval L. Patrick told the Associated Press he expects the final results “very soon.”

In the meantime, the MIT Emergency Operations Center is delivering three to five five-gallon containers of Poland Spring water to living groups in Boston. MIT plans to continue water deliveries for the duration of the crisis.

Ari P. Miller ’11, president of Beta Theta Pi, said that his fraternity recently received the water provided by MIT. Several brothers also went to Shaw’s this weekend to buy bottled water as well, Miller said.

Renaldo M. Webb ’10, president of Phi Delta Theta, said that the crisis “hasn’t actually been that bad.” Phi Delta Theta regularly receives Poland Spring water delivery and got a new delivery “right before the crisis happened.” The fraternity keeps a stockpile of water, and has not really been affected by the shortage, he said.

On Saturday, the day of the break, Massachusetts Governor Deval L. Patrick declared a state of emergency and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority issued a boil water order asking residents in affected areas to boil tap water before consuming it. Residents have been asked to restrict water use to essen-

tial purposes only.

Affected areas included 30 communities east of Weston including Boston, Brookline, and Somerville, but not Cambridge. The affected communities were all Massachusetts Water Resources Authority customers who derived their water from the Quabbin Reservoir in central Massachusetts. Since Cambridge draws its water from the Fresh Pond Reservoir, owned and operated by the Cambridge Water Department, the city — including most of MIT — was not affected.

Clean water from the Sudbury Aqueduct and untreated water from an emergency back-up reservoir system, the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, are currently supplying affected communities and is safe for bathing, flushing, and fire prevention but not for human consumption.

“It’s like lake water. You’ll swim in it, but not drink it,” Frederick Laskey, executive director of the MWRA, said to the Associated Press.

The break was reported 10 miles west of Boston in Weston between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Saturday. It occurred in a coupling joining two sections of 10-foot-wide metal piping. At its worst, the breach resulted in water leaking into the Charles River at a rate of 8 million gallons per hour, causing water levels to rise in the Charles and forcing pumps to be activated at a nearby dam.

The contaminated water is estimated to have affected nearly 750,000 households, the *New York Times* reported. Residents have swept bottled water off shelves in grocery stores around Boston. The state of Massachusetts has asked bottled-water companies to supply more water to ease demand and the National Guard has been distributing emergency water as well.

Updates on the situation and the status of the boil water order can be found on the MWRA’s website, <http://www.mwra.com/>.

Jessica J. Pourian contributed to the reporting of this article.

## REPORTER’S NOTEBOOK

# As memes go mainstream, lols

## Internet celebrities visit MIT for ROFLcon redux



FENG WU—THE TECH

Panelists Jamie Wilkinson and Kenyatta Cheese (Know Your Meme), Greg Rutter (Youshouldhaveseenthis.com), and Christopher “moot” Poole (4chan) show Ben Huh (I Can Has Cheezburger?) some love during the Mainstreaming the Web panel of ROFLcon after Ben said, with regard to ROFLCon, “I feel like I’m part of something special.” ROFLCon, a two day conference on Internet culture, took place last Friday and Saturday on campus.

By Meghan Nelson  
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

Last weekend at ROFLcon, I was online without being on the internet. The guest list read like a printout of my browser history.

In front of me sat Ben Huh of I Can Has Cheezburger? next to moot of 4chan. In the audience among hundreds of fans like me, sat Charlie Schmidt of Keyboard Cat, Lauren Leto and Benjamin Bator of Texts from Last Night, and Ryan North of Dinosaur Comics, to name a few of my Internet heroes.

“oh shit, the whole internets here” read an online, real-time comment displayed on a projec-

tion screen in 26-100.

Last Friday and Saturday, ROFLcon 2 descended upon MIT, the biggest gathering of internet celebrities ever. ROFLcon (“Rolling On the Floor Laughing conference”) was established in 2008 to bring together creators of memes to discuss and celebrate internet culture. Although held on the MIT campus both years, Harvard undergraduates Tim Hwang and Christina Xu organized both the 2008 and 2010 ROFLcons.

When the official ROFLcon web site describes the 2008 conference as “a kickass time, not to mention the most important gatherings since the fall of the tower of Babel,” a second confer-

ence sounds hard to top.

While the Internet has forever skewed my perception of what’s “good” (or “right” or “ethical” for that matter), ROFLCon 2 at least quantitatively outdid the first, bringing together even more memes and dispensing more lulz. Approximately 950 attendees registered, up from 500 attendees in 2008. They came from places as far as Israel, Brazil, and Scotland according to Hwang. Of the 78 “featured guests,” 66 were the internet celebrities who created the actual memes. The other 12 were academics and researchers who study memes. The re-

ROFLcon Page 10

## Don’t call it a helicopter



BRIAN HEMOND—THE TECH

Students watch as a V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft departs Briggs Field during a brief rain squall on Monday, May 3. The Osprey, operated by the Marines of VMM-264, Air Station New River North Carolina, arrived at MIT as part of an event sponsored by the Marines and the MIT Flying Club.

## WILL THIS OIL SPILL BE THE LAST?

If the past is any guide, no. Oil is a dirty business and no policy band-aids will change that. We have to move on. **OPN, p. 5**

## WHO’S AFRAID OF FINANCE REFORM?

At best, the GOP is blocking reform to score points. At worst, it is engaging in pure deception. **OPN, p. 4**



## WHAT A WEEKEND!

Photos from Steer Roast, acapella concerts and more. **p. 6-7**



## STEAL MY COMIC

The power of suggestion. **FUN, p. 8**

## SECTIONS

World & Nation . . . 2  
Opinion . . . . . 4  
Fun Pages . . . . . 8  
Sports . . . . . 12





# Deadly flooding forces evacuations in Nashville

By William Harless and Joseph Berger  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

NASHVILLE — Parts of downtown Nashville were evacuated Monday as the rising Cumberland River, swollen by two days of drenching thunderstorms, flowed into streets near the country music joints and honky-tonk bars that have made the city a tourist attraction.

At least 19 people in Tennessee, Kentucky and Mississippi have been killed as a result of some of the heaviest rains in residents' memories — 13 inches fell in Nashville, a record for a two-day period.

Officials in Tennessee were bracing for more as the Cumberland continued to rise, reaching 50 feet, a level not seen since the 1960s, before a system of flood-control dams was built. Thirteen deaths have been recorded in Tennessee, including six in Nashville.

Nashville authorities were particularly concerned about a leaking levee that allowed floodwater to spill onto some streets in north Nashville. Flooding also closed First

Avenue near the riverfront, and officials feared that it could reach a commuter railroad depot and LP Field, home of the NFL Tennessee Titans. Some restaurants and bars near the river were closed.

About 1,500 guests at the Gaylord Opryland Resort, which sits alongside the Cumberland, were forced to leave the hotel overnight. They were taken by bus to a high school on higher ground. Gaylord Entertainment, which owns the hotel, said on its website that it would probably be closed for several months because of damage from the floodwaters.

One of the city's two sewage treatment plants was submerged. Mayor Karl Dean of Nashville asked residents to cut their water use in half by using it only for drinking and cooking, or risk contamination of the city's drinking water.

Bus service in Nashville was suspended because the system's headquarters were severely flooded. Electric power was cut off to some downtown buildings, including the Symphony Center. All told, about 14,000 customers were

without power in Nashville, a city of 626,000 people. The city is the second-largest in Tennessee and home to Vanderbilt University and other colleges and a major regional center for health care, banking and transportation.

"There's a lot to be done, but we'll get it done," Dean said Monday afternoon at a news conference.

Chief Ronal W. Serpas of the Nashville Police Department said that of the city's six storm-related deaths, two victims were found in their homes, two were in cars and two were outdoors.

Heavy storms deluged the Atlanta area as well, dumping 4 to nearly 6 inches of rain in about six hours early Monday, delaying flights at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and causing flash floods in several creeks.

Firefighters reported rescuing a woman clinging to a wooden dresser floating in her guest house in the Buckhead section of Atlanta, where Nancy Creek flooded. In DeKalb County, part of the metro area, 45 residents were evacuated from a flooded apartment complex.

# N.Y. governor's policy may help immigrants facing deportation

By Danny Hakim and Nina Bernstein  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

ALBANY — Gov. David A. Paterson announced on Monday that the state would accelerate consideration and granting of pardons to legal immigrants for old or minor criminal convictions, in an effort to prevent them from being deported.

The move sets up a confrontation between the governor and federal immigration officials, who have taken more aggressive action to increase deportations in recent years. Immigration lawyers on both sides called the step extraordinary and said it could ultimately affect thousands of people in New York.

"Some of our immigration laws, particularly with respect to deportation, are embarrassingly and wrongly inflexible," Paterson said in a speech on Monday at an annual gathering of the state's top judges. "In New York we believe in renewal," he added. "In New York, we believe in rehabilitation."

Paterson is establishing a special five-member state panel to review the cases; while few such cases are currently pending, the

administration expects an influx of hundreds of new pardon applications by the end of the year.

The move thrusts the governor into the middle of the country's immigration debate and could give new hope to legal immigrants facing deportation.

Paterson said the new policy was in the works weeks before Arizona enacted a law late last month to give the police there broad authority to question people about their immigration status. It was spurred in part by his pardon in March of Qing Hong Wu, a 29-year-old information technology executive who The New York Times reported had been threatened with deportation because he participated in a series of muggings as a 14-year-old. He had not lived in his native China since he was 5.

"We just feel that some of these charges are very minor in nature and some of these conversations go back beyond a decade for people who've demonstrated that they've lived productive lives in the interim," Paterson said. "We're separating these cases from ones where there are egregious crimes."

The White House referred calls to the Department of Homeland Security, which would not com-

ment directly on the governor's plan.

"DHS continues to focus on smart, effective immigration enforcement that prioritizes criminal aliens who present the greatest risk to the security of our communities," Matt Chandler, a spokesman for the agency, said. "At the same time, we are applying common sense and using discretion on a case-by-case basis to ensure that our enforcement is meeting our priorities."

Paterson does not need legislative approval to undertake the new policy. Federal immigration laws enacted in 1996 greatly expanded the categories of legal immigrants subject to mandatory deportation as "aggravated felons," including people who had pleaded guilty to misdemeanor drug possession.

For years after the laws' passage, immigration authorities had neither the resources nor the political will to track down or detain legal permanent residents with relatively minor convictions. Because of that, many people years ago pleaded guilty to criminal charges in exchange for probation or no jail time, without having been advised by their lawyers that the plea made them subject to deportation.

# Mammoth hemoglobin offers more clues to Arctic evolution

For the first time in 43,000 years, a woolly mammoth has breathed again on earth.

Well, not the mammoth itself but its hemoglobin, the stuff in red blood cells that takes on oxygen in the lungs and offloads it in the tissues. By reconstructing the mammoth's hemoglobin, a team led by Kevin L. Campbell of the University of Manitoba in Canada has discovered how the once tropical species adapted to living in arctic temperatures.

"It is a very exciting result and opens a new chapter in paleontology, a subject usually constrained to examining old bones and teeth," said Adrian Lister, an expert on mammoth evolution at the Natural History Museum in London.

Mammoths, despite their association with the frozen north, originated in the tropics when they split apart from elephants some seven million years ago. To adapt to the cold of northern latitudes they developed smaller ears, a thick fur coat and glands in their skin to keep the fur well oiled.

So much is clear from their remains. But other kinds of adaptation, which have not survived, would also have been necessary. Most arctic animals arrange their blood vessels so that the arteries going down a leg can transfer heat to the veins coming up. The blood reaching the toes is thus quite cold and the animal conserves lots of heat while it stands on frozen ground.

—Nicholas Wade, *The New York Times*

# Greece takes its bailout, but doubts for region persist

ATHENS — Greece announced Sunday that it had reached agreement on a long-delayed financial rescue package that would require years of painful belt-tightening, but the deal might not be enough to stop the spread of economic contagion to other European countries with mounting debts and troubled economies.

The bailout, which was worked out over weeks of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and Greece's European partners, calls for as much as 120 billion euros, or \$160 billion, in loans over the next three years intended to avoid a debt default.

In Greece, Prime Minister George Papandreou, the scion of a Socialist dynasty whose father helped erect the sprawling Greek welfare state when he was prime minister in the 1980s, sought to prepare Greeks for what was expected to be the greatest overhaul of the state in a generation.

"I want to tell Greeks very honestly," he said, "that we have a big trial ahead of us."

—Dan Bilefsky and Landon Thomas Jr., *The New York Times*

# U.S. farmers cope with Round-up-resistant weeds

Just as the heavy use of antibiotics contributed to the rise of drug-resistant supergerms, American farmers' near-ubiquitous use of the weedkiller Roundup has led to the rapid growth of tenacious new superweeds.

To fight them, farmers throughout the East, Midwest and South are being forced to spray fields with more toxic herbicides, pull weeds by hand and return to more labor-intensive plowing methods.

Farm experts say that such efforts could lead to higher food prices, lower crop yields, rising farm costs, and more pollution of land and water.

"It is the single largest threat to production agriculture that we have ever seen," said Andrew Wargo III, the president of the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts.

The first resistant species to pose a serious threat to agriculture was spotted in a Delaware soybean field in 2000. Since then, the problem has spread, with 10 resistant species in at least 22 states infesting millions of acres, predominantly soybeans, cotton and corn.

The superweeds could temper American agriculture's enthusiasm for some genetically modified crops. Soybeans, corn and cotton that are engineered to survive spraying with Roundup have become standard in American fields. However, if Roundup does not kill the weeds, farmers have little incentive to spend the extra money for the special seeds.

—William Neuman and Andrew Pollack, *The New York Times*

April 30 & May 1 & 6-7 at 8:00 PM  
May 2 & 8 at 2:00 PM

La Sala de Puerto Rico  
2nd floor, MIT Student Center

The MIT Gilbert & Sullivan  
Players present

The Gondoliers  
or The King of Barataria

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## SEEING GREEN

# Spill, baby, spill!

## *The inevitable consequences of oil dependency*

**By Holly Moeller**

Ladies and Gentlemen, add British Petroleum to your list of gas stations to avoid. While “Beyond Petroleum” had some success with a massive rebranding campaign that briefly convinced the public that the petrochemical giant was greener than Greenpeace (see a troubling 2008 UK study), the ongoing Gulf of Mexico spill will surely smear its green, floral logo.

On April 20, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig burst into flames, killing 11 workers before sinking below the surface. Despite early assurances from BP that no oil was leaking, by April 24 we knew that wasn't the case. Officially, 210,000 gallons of oil are billowing to the surface every day — though some satellite analyses of the spill's extent suggest the rate might be up to four times higher (as fast as 10 gallons per second). For comparison, the legal maximum flow rate for showerheads in the US is just 2.5 gallons per minute.

Two weeks later, oil is lapping at the edges of the Louisiana coast, and New Orleans is filled with the stench of hydrocarbons. An offshore well that was supposed to be out of sight and out of mind (some 45 miles from shore and 1 mile beneath the sea surface) is now the dominant topic of conversation.

The timing is both ironic, scarcely one month after President Obama opened key coastal waters to offshore drilling, and tragic. It's migration season for millions of birds, which must now forage amid poisoned marshlands. It's also nesting season for endangered sea turtles, which must now drag themselves up oil-slicked beaches. The turtles, by the way, face a double threat: They may be entangled in the nets of shrimp boats, which are springing to action in a last-ditch effort to scoop up the crustaceans before oil shuts down the fishery, as it already has the oyster industry and local finfisheries. First estimates predict \$2.5 billion in fishery losses, with another \$3 billion lost in tourism revenues.

Meanwhile, the human element is busy doing the finger-pointing dance of impotence, unable to staunch the subterranean flow of oil or contain the surface slick. Some of the excuses are valid. Murphy's law has summoned rough weather to the area, sloshing oil over floating booms set out to contain the spill and washing the inky slick far back into already-degraded coastal wetlands. Some rationalizations are more troubling: Automatic shutoffs have failed and containment equipment is absent or inadequate.

As response teams recruit fishermen to crew cleanup craft, and volunteers hustle oiled birds and marine mammals into rehabilitation centers, there's hushed, fearful talk of just how bad this could get. If the spill isn't contained, prevailing currents — especially the Gulf Stream — could fun-



nel oil through the Straits of Florida (full of coral reefs and seagrass beds) and up the East Coast.

But BP could never have predicted a disaster of this “unprecedented” magnitude, or so it says amid half-baked attempts to defend its lack of preparedness.

That's a funny choice of words since, thirty-one years ago, the second largest spill in history occurred right there in the Gulf of Mexico. The Ixtoc 1 was an exploratory oil well run by Mexican company Pemex which clogged, then blew, in June of 1979. About 150 million gallons of crude oil spilled out before the well was finally capped — on March 23, 1980.

That's nine months after the explosion. And nine years (to the day) before the infamous Exxon Valdez spill that overlaid our national vision of pristine Alaskan waters with snapshots of oily bald eagles and dead sea otters.

Oh, is that why some of your friends refuse to refuel at Exxon pumps? You might also know people who avoid Shell (some awkwardness surrounding waste dumping and executions in Nigeria), Texaco (and now, Chevron, which inherited its exploi-

tation mess in Ecuador), or Citgo (on the principle that a 60'x60' flashing sign is an eyesore — if Venezuelan politics weren't enough).

The environmental violators list keeps growing. And we still haven't added its most important member: you. Each year, we Americans spill 180 million gallons of used oil when we refuel our lawnmowers, change the oil in our cars, and generally go about our daily business. That's sixteen times the volume of the Valdez spill — more, even, than the Ixtoc 1 incident.

Worldwide, NASA estimates that 37 million gallons of oil are lost each year in big, newsworthy spills. But 363 million gallons are quietly dumped “down the drain” in small drips and spills or through improper disposal; an additional 137 million gallons are spilled during routine maintenance — like washing out the holds of oil tankers.

But even if this Gulf spill is just a splash in the global waste bucket (read: the ocean), its acute severity might just provide a wake up call that's audible over the baseline noise. Stalin said that "the death of one man is a tragedy. The death of millions is a statistic." Before our eyes, the

world is slowly dying of our oil thirst. But maybe this giant puncture will do what a thousand small cuts from global warming, terrorism, and rising gas prices couldn't. Maybe we will finally acknowledge that the oil business, be it domestic or abroad, is a dirty one, and no hands will be clean until we wash ours of fossil fuel dependency.

If there's a will to change, though, we must exercise it quickly. Our alternative energy prospects are ready for action, and we should let them join the big leagues while the memory of BP's spill is still fresh. Because forty years ago in Santa Barbara, CA, twenty years ago in Valdez, AK, and four years ago on Alaska's North Slope, we cried foul and vowed, "Never again!" But, after we passed a few laws and collected a few fines, those memories faded. Now, "again" has happened, again. And history will continue to repeat itself, unless today is the day we take a stand.

*Holly Moeller is a graduate student in the MIT/WHOI Joint Program in Biological Oceanography. She welcomes reader feedback at hollyvm@mit.edu. This is a special edition of "Seeing Green," which usually runs on alternate Tuesdays.*

# Stop these unfounded attacks on the finance reform bill

Financial reform, from Page 4

false alarms (failing banks that are not insolvent)? How should we strike the balance between reducing the compliance costs of regulation versus improving the decision-making accuracy of the regulator? How can we design organizational incentives such that the regulator strikes the balance between these Type I and Type II errors in the same way that society wishes it to strike the balance? Given the difficulty in aligning the regulator's incentives with those of society and the tendency of hard rules to be circumvented by private actors, how much should we leave the process of oversight to regulator discretion versus inflexible rules? How do we harmonize the resolution process for international firms, where there is a tension during the resolution process between paying off domestic depositors before foreign depositors? Should complex financial constructs, such as some classes of derivatives, be banned on the grounds that regulators and credit rating agencies lack the sophistication to value them? Can we mitigate the systemic effects of counter-party risk by bringing derivatives into a clearinghouse structure, without sacrificing the value that derivative customization might

provide? These are not simple questions, even for technical experts, and require the sort of tough value judgments that inevitably generate controversy.

**Republicans are engaging in pure political deception. We should not for a moment give credit to the charge that the Dodd bill creates “bailouts forever”**

However, instead of delving into these weighty problems, Republicans have seized upon two provisions in the bill — the so-called “bailout fund,” a \$50 billion (\$150 billion in the House version) pot of money raised through a tax on financial institutions, and the decision to identify systematically important firms and require them to create resolution plans — and by misconstruing these provisions, are now trying to turn what should be a technical, non-partisan debate about how best to accomplish mutually held goals, into a partisan point-

scoring opportunity.

Perhaps, in part, the GOP can be forgiven. After all, it's not as if Democrats haven't been trying to score points throughout this process as well, and surely a loyal opposition is entitled to strip away the spin that the majority has applied to their favored policies. We should recognize the "pre-funded resolution fund" for what it is: a pre-paid bailout tax whose costs will be passed on to bank customers (not absorbed entirely by a fall in bank profits, as Democrats pretend). We should also be concerned that identifying systemically important institutions will remove the constructive ambiguity that might otherwise keep "heads-I-win-tails-you-lose" financial gaming in check.

On the larger point however, Republicans are engaging in pure political deception. We should not for a moment give credit to the charge that the Dodd bill creates "bailouts forever." Preparing for a rainy day is not the same as causing a rainy day. As much as we might wish to completely eliminate any chance of future socialized losses, we have to accept that regulators do not operate with perfect information, and even with best intentions will inevitably make mistakes. The loss of constructive ambiguity that comes from not making it clear whether the gov-

ernment will offer bailouts is more than offset by the improved resolution authority that this bill creates. If anything, the bill as it stands does not do enough to promote bailouts. If a regulator incorrectly decides a bank is insolvent, and forces them into receivership, there is no way to second-guess their assessment. We have no counter-factual with which to compare — because we never got to see the future play out, it is only the bank's word against the regulator's that a bailout would have otherwise happened. But if a regulator fails to stop an insolvent bank from making bets on the taxpayer's dime, it will be patently clear that they made a mistake. In hindsight, we would be able to say something to the effect of, "You should have dissolved this bank two months ago." The organizational incentives faced by the regulator are such that we should expect them to be trigger-happy when it comes to closing banks, not the other way around.

The Republican claim that this reform bill is being rushed is correct. There is no hurry, and the public deserves a full and honest debate on how we will regulate our financial markets. But there are two sides of this coin — before Democrats slow the pace, Republicans need to prove themselves capable of honest argument.





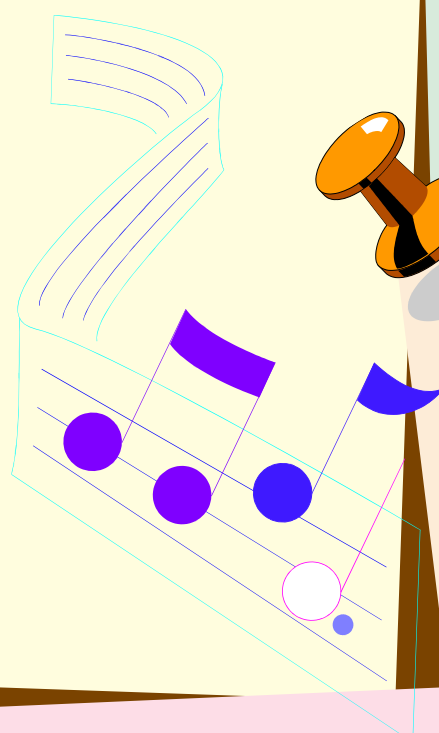
**Richard S. Yau '10 performs his Senior Singout**, a dramatic rendition of Mulan's "I'll Make a Man Out of You," with the MIT/Wellesley Toons' 20th Anniversary Concert Saturday evening in 10-250.

To complete his last performance with the MIT Chorallaries, **Michael R. Blaise '10** sings his first solo, "Papercut," with the group at their annual Spring Concert on Friday. He is joined by current members and alumni of the Chorallaries.



ARFA AHJAZI—THE TECH

## Acapella spring concerts



## Greek Week(end)



STEVE HOWLAND—THE TECH

**Sean D. Fannin '13 and Jordan Lyday** dive and struggle against their bungee-cord harnesses to get their velcro marker further along the centerline at the Greek Week(end) 2010 carnival held by Panhel/IFC on Kresge lawn on Friday. Tickets given out at the front could be used for food or a number of events, and the Greek Week(end) team which ran each station received credit toward their team's total. The winning team selects which charity receives all the proceeds from the week-end.

## V-22 Osprey opens up interior for student tours

Students eagerly explore the insides of a **MV-22 Osprey**. The tilt-rotor helicopter landed on Briggs Field and visited other Boston landmarks on Monday as part of Marine Week Boston.



## Mother's Day glass sale



GREG STEINBRECHER—THE TECH

Students and visitors examine the pieces available at the **MIT Glass Lab's annual Mother's Day sale** yesterday afternoon. The sale is primarily staffed by students and staff of the Glass Lab, many of whom have pieces available for purchase. The sale will continue until 4 p.m. today.

## Steer Roast is meat, music, and mud

**Left: Beef is cooked over the pit at Steer Roast on Friday.** The lighting of the pit (by tradition with a flaming ball of toilet paper) marks the beginning of Steer Roast, Senior House's annual weekend-long party with several hundred pounds of meat, music, and mud wrestling.

**Below: Joseph E. Lemberg '11 and Aaron N. Flores '12 mud wrestle** during Steer Roast on Saturday. Steer Roast, an annual weekend-long event hosted by Senior House, features meat and performances by a number of bands, in addition to mud wrestling matches.



ADITI VERMA—THE TECH



ADITI VERMA—THE TECH



ERIC D. SCHMIEDL—THE TECH

**Sam Franklin of "Mamarazzi"** plays on Saturday at Steer Roast 2010. Mamarazzi was one of eleven bands that performed at Steer Roast.

## LaHood on distracted driving



**U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood** speaks on the dangers of distracted driving in the Media Lab on Monday. LaHood challenged MIT students to develop new technologies and media strategies to develop decreasing number of deaths and injuries attributed to talking on the phone, texting, e-mailing, and other distractions while driving.

ARFA AHJAZI—THE TECH

## MURAL ORIGAMI



STEPHANIE C. LIN

Artist and architect **Otto L. Ng G** stands in front of **MURAL ORIGAMI**, his winning entry in the 2010 MIT Student Mural Competition, in Stata on Monday. The mural consists of a photograph of a person walking on the sidewalk overlaid on a computer-generated image of a theoretically possible 3D surface. The mural will be on display in the Stata Center for one year.



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# Some professors say finance reform bill misses point

By Binyamin Appelbaum and Sewell Chan  
*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

As Democrats close in on their goal of overhauling the nation's financial regulations, several prominent experts say that the legislation does not even address the right problems, leaving the financial system vulnerable to another major crisis.

Some point to specific issues left largely untouched, like the instability of capital markets that provide money for lenders, or the government's role in the housing market, including the future of the housing finance companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Others simply argue that it is premature to pass sweeping legislation while so much about the crisis remains unclear and so many investigations are still in progress.

"Until we understand what the causes were, we may be implementing ineffective and even counterproductive reforms," said Andrew W. Lo, a finance professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "I understand the need for action. I understand the need for something to be done. But what I expect from political leaders is for them to demonstrate leadership in telling the public that we need to proceed about this in a much more deliberate and rational and thoughtful way."

Senate Republicans echoed some of these concerns as they delayed debate on the legislation last week. Democrats agree that significant issues remain to be addressed. But they say that the government must press forward in responding to the problems that already are clear.

The bill, which was introduced by Christopher Dodd, D-Conn, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, would extend oversight to a wider range of financial institutions and activities. It would create a new agency to protect borrowers from abuse by lenders, including mortgage and credit card companies. And it seeks to ensure that troubled companies, however large, can be liquidated at no cost to taxpayers.

A diverse group of critics, however, say the legislation focuses on the precipitators of the recent crisis, like abusive mortgage lending, rather than the mechanisms by which the crisis spread.

Gary B. Gorton, a finance professor at Yale, said the financial system would remain vulnerable to panics

because the legislation would not improve the reliability of the markets where lenders get money, by issuing short-term debt called commercial paper or loans called repurchase agreements or "repos."

The recent crisis began as investors nervous about mounting subprime mortgage losses started demanding higher returns, then withholding money altogether. The government is now moving to prevent abusive mortgage lending, but Gorton said investors could just as easily be spooked by something else.

The flight of investors is the modern version of a bank run, in which depositors line up to withdraw their money. The banking industry was plagued by runs until the government introduced deposit insurance during the Great Depression. Gorton said the industry had now entered a new era of instability.

"It is unfortunate if we end up repeating history," Gorton said. "It's basically tragic that we can't understand the importance of this issue."

Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner agreed in testimony before the House Financial Services Committee in April that "more work remains to be done in this area," but he said that regulators could address the issue without legislation. The government plans to require lenders to hold larger reserves against unexpected losses and to require that they keep money on hand to meet short-term needs.

David A. Skeel Jr., a corporate law professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said it would be a mistake for Congress to leave the drafting of these standards to the discretion of regulators.

"Regulators working right now will be tough," Skeel said. "But we know from history that as soon as this legislative moment passes, the ball is going to shift back into Wall Street's court. As soon as the crisis passes, what inevitably happens is that the people that are paying the most attention are the banks."

A second group of critics say the government helped to seed the crisis through its efforts to increase home ownership, including the role of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in buying mortgage loans to make more money available for lending. The companies are now owned by the government after incurring enormous losses on loans that borrowers could not afford to repay.

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Solution to Kenken

from page 8

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1-	2	3	4	5	1
	20X		5-		6
2	3	4	5	1	6

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# MIT Go Club Study Break!



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Contact [mitgoclub-staff@mit.edu](mailto:mitgoclub-staff@mit.edu) for more information.

# The Internet pays a visit to campus *Meme-fest ROFLcon FTW!*

ROFLcon, from Page 1

searchers highlighted the changes brewing on the 'net: The fragmentation and commercialization of Internet memes — because for better or for worse, Internet subculture is hitting the mainstream.

### Legitimizing the internets

While the battle cry of ROFLcon appeared to be “for the lulz,” it had a surprising academic presence.

“Usually we don’t lol at Chinese lolcats and they don’t lol at ours... which is problematic!” said co-keynote speaker Ethan Zuckerman from Harvard, discussing the unifying and fracturing potential of international memes.

Keynote speeches were given by Zuckerman, member of The Berkman Center for Internet and Society and danah boyd MS '02 from Microsoft Research. (boyd prefers to render her name completely lowercase. She explains on her website that “I am not my name; my name is simply another descriptor of me.”) They discussed the problem that memes are an individual cultural phenomenon, and by not learning about memes from other countries we risk creating Internet and international communities that cannot communicate with each other.

China is just one place our cultures are diverging, Zuckerman discussed. For instance, in China which heavily censors YouTube, the primary source of user-generated video is Youku. If you search for

### You don’t know meme

Not all panels were meant to be so serious; some were just meme-creators sitting down and discussing their craft. Along with moderators leading the discussion, the audience asked questions to the panelists online using their laptops or phones.

Neil Cicirega, creator of the Animation genre and series like Potter Puppets Pals, reminisced about one of his fans: “I was reading about this guy who had killed this girl and was planning on eating her... I was looking at his Geocities page, and he linked to me as ‘some of the funniest videos I’ve ever seen.’ He just got life.”

Joel Veitch of rathergood.com is the creator of the deranged-squirrel musical video “We Like the Moon,” later the inspiration of a Quiznos commercial, and the recent “The Internet is Made of Cats” video. He was asked why cats are inherently funnier than dogs. “Cute animals are an easy ... I started doing stuff with little furry animals [because] you can love them, but only in the way you’d love a terrible diseased child.” Later on he added, “With a dog, a dog loves you, and if you died the dog will pine. But with a cat, it pretends to love you, and if you were to die it would just eat your corpse.”

When asked how they actually created their viral memes, most panelists credited luck instead of skill or creativity. “However good you are at it, you’ll never create the mystery and wonder that is Keyboard Cat” said Zuckerman. Cue thunderous applause.

## “We did not know China had cute cat technology”

—Ethan Zuckerman  
FELLOW, BERKMAN CENTER

“funny cats” in Youku, it displays thousands of videos, just like its American counterpart. “This is of terrifying geopolitical importance... We did not know China had cute cat technology,” Zuckerman said.

The real problem isn’t potentially losing the lolcat race, but that the cultures’ memes are diverging because they are using different websites: “Someday we may actually end up with Internets that aren’t talking to each other and maybe someday Internets that can’t talk to one another. We need to meme at each other!” said Zuckerman.

He displayed a map of the world with numbers of memes that came from each country. He was happy to report though that while historically Africa had produced no memes, Kenya had recently created its first. Makmende Amerudi, a pseudo-Chuck Norris, has quickly gone viral in Kenya. Web sites have been established listing Makmende facts, and his portrait has found its way onto parody 10,000 shillings notes.

Our task is to learn about these other cultures’ memes, he said, so that we can continue interacting with them constructively. He compared interacting with memes to exchanging literature or news stories. “The easiest way to cross cultural barriers is to laugh,” Zuckerman said.

Other panels had a similar academic vibe. On Friday the creators of My Mom is a FOB, Stuff White People Like, and The Onion sat down in an event titled “i can haz dream?: race and the internet.” The moderator of the panel discussion, Lisa Nakamura from the University of Illinois-Champaign, stated that race is an important aspect of internet use: “When something claims to be apolitical ‘just for the lulz’ it has the potential to be racially transformative,” she said.

### “Crisis of Weird”

I spent both days of the conference in a constant state tip-of-the-tongue frustration from seeing people I knew I had seen before, but couldn’t remember where. If it weren’t for the name tags, most of the actual internet celebrities wouldn’t have been recognized. It’s not just that they look like us, it’s that they are us.

More than once I heard someone say “oh that guy!” after long scrutiny of someone’s face.

That’s the reality of Internet fame — creators of these memes are just a couple of people like us who happened to get famous. I prefer it this way; at the very least they’re not famous for merely being famous like IRL celebrities, they’ve brought something to the table, be it a lolcat or Naked Obama on a Unicorn.

However, for being at MIT, I was disappointed by the lack of MIT students I saw. Besides volunteers, most attendees didn’t appear to have any connection to MIT and I saw more than one student ask around what the entire thing was about. How can we expect to be global leaders in anything if we don’t hascheez-burgers? The Internet is a thriving culture as any other, and deserves serious anthropological studying just like anything else.

If the Internet is a series of tubes, there were times this weekend when it felt like I was climbing through its sewers. The event’s programs, designed after 90s era floppy-disk casings, came packaged with an official ROFLcon condom imprinted with a classy goatse icon.

Toscanini’s created a new flavor of ice cream inspired by the conference, titled “The Internet.” The flavor, a mixture of vanilla ice cream and Nerds candy, highlighted, for the most part, the demographic of the event: white and nerdy.

As identified by danah boyd and others throughout the conference, Internet culture is undergoing a profound transition, becoming increasingly commercialized and marketed. much to the dismay of those who remember its roots.

# DR. EXCELLENT'S SING-ALONG BLOG

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OF AWESOME

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5:30PM SAT. MAY 8 10-250



Making money on the Internet inevitably means advertising and merchandising, the coming of the marketer. We're going through a "national weirdness crisis," boyd said, where "memes immediately become a commercial."

Most panelists were asked what their day jobs were. Very few had any outside of their web sites or blogs. Hur of the cheezburger network has forty employees and contractually cannot discuss his income; David DeVore, the big half from the video David At the Dentist admitted he's made somewhere around \$125,000 from it. While most people create memes for the lulz, if the meme becomes viral their creators then keep them going for the profits.

There was a bubbling tension between those who create the memes and those who profit from it. At the event, I saw a clear distinction between those who were genuine attendees and those who were from businesses: those who belonged and who didn't. Two self-described /b/tards heckled advertising agents sitting in front of them, telling them to leave and, subsequently, "show me your tits."

What memes we'll be telling — or hiding — from our children in five, ten, twenty years from now was often asked of the panelists. How much we'll let "the suits," as boyd stated, rule what we read and lol at

in the future is the current question — and crisis — the Internet is going through.

In the past, the currency of the internet was credit for work, but with increasing commercialization, Internet currency is now real currency, and it's a matter of livelihood who gets paid for what work. The phenomenon of lolcats came from 4chan, and in the last panelist discussion, moot of 4chan asked Hur of the cheezburger network, who was profiting tremendously on other people's work, what he was giving back to the Internet community, if anything.

**The underlying motivations behind memes may be changing from humor to money...**

The underlying motivations behind memes may be changing from humor to money, but at least in 2010 ROFLcon was a celebration of hilarious memes. The existence and ultimately successful run of an event like ROFLcon suggests that memes have socially important and redeeming value and proves that the Internet, funnily enough, is serious business.

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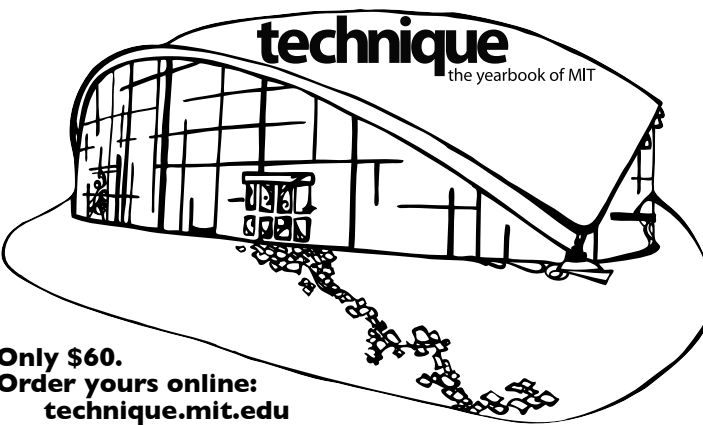
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### Solution to Sudoku

from page 8

8	3	2	6	4	9	5	7	1
6	1	7	8	5	3	9	2	4
9	5	4	7	2	1	3	8	6
5	7	9	1	8	4	6	3	2
3	2	6	9	7	5	1	4	8
1	4	8	3	6	2	7	5	9
2	8	1	5	9	7	4	6	3
7	6	3	4	1	8	2	9	5
4	9	5	2	3	6	8	1	7

### Solution to Crossword

from page 8

C	A	R	U	R	S	U	L	A	A	S	I	A			
A	M	A	P	O	I	S	E	D	P	A	L	M			
W	A	T	E	R	B	R	E	A	D	H	O	U	S	E	
E	N	E	M	I	E	S	R	O	E	C	A	N			
D	A	L	I	S	A	N	N	L	E	E					
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D	O	H	A	N	I	L	L	Y	S	L	A	G			
A	L	A	R	M	D	E	B	U	G	L	I	T			
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L	I	E	S	O	X	C	H	O	C	H	O	L	A	T	E
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M	A	T	A		R	O	B	E	R	T	L	D	R		

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Speaker: Dr. Mahadevan  
Professor of applied mathematics and of organismic and evolutionary biology, Harvard University

# A Search for Meaning... Through Science

Thursday, May 6, 2010, 7:30 pm

W11—Religious Activities Center  
(corner of Amherst and Mass. Ave.)

For people of all faiths, and none.  
Dessert will be served.

Questions: [ora@mit.edu](mailto:ora@mit.edu)  
Website: [studentlife.mit.edu/rl/addir\\_fellows](http://studentlife.mit.edu/rl/addir_fellows)

## MIT Interfaith Dialogue



SPORTS SHORTS

Track and field finish 2nd at New England DIII Championships

Both the men’s and women’s track and field teams finished in second place at the NCAA Division III New England Championships last weekend.

The women’s team, ranked No. 9 in the country, finished behind Williams College but set four MIT records and 11 NCAA qualifying marks. Portia M. Jones ’12 set NCAA qualifying standards in four events, and won two events, the 200m and 4x100 relay. Jacqueline M. Wentz ’10 had a pair of NCAA qualifying times in the 800 and the 3000-meter Steeplechase, and won both events. Hazel L. Briner ’11 set a new MIT record in the heptathlon with 4,262 points, good for second place. The junior had second place finishes in the 100m hurdles, 200m dash, 800m and shot put, in addition to a third in the high jump.

The men’s team held the tournament lead throughout the weekend, but was edged by Williams College in on the last event and finished five points short.

Stephen Morton led the Engineers, scoring almost a fifth of MIT’s total points. Morton

won the long jump, one of four first-place finishes for the team.

MIT will participate in the NEICAAA Championship next weekend at Northeastern University. The Engineers will compete against the top teams in the region from across Divisions I, II and III, as the meet gets underway on Friday, May 7 at 3:00 p.m.

— Greg McKeever, DAPER staff

Women’s lacrosse falls in NEWMAC semifinals

The women’s lacrosse team fell to top-seeded Babson College, 16-7, in the NEWMAC Tournament semifinals Saturday.

Erica W. Little ’11 led the Engineers with three goals, and Casey M. Flynn ’10 provided three assists.

Babson controlled the entire game, jumping out to a 4-0 lead. After an MIT goal, Babson scored four more unanswered points and extended their lead to 9-2 at halftime. They eventually extended their lead to 12-2; MIT made a comeback attempt with a 5-2 run in the second half, but could not overcome the deficit.

The Engineers close out their season with an overall record of 9-7, finishing over .500 for the second straight season.

— David Zhu, Sports editor



JESSICA LIU—THE TECH

The men’s lightweight varsity eight finishes just behind the University of Delaware in their race on Saturday. The Engineers finished second by half a second.

UPCOMING HOME EVENT

Wednesday, May 5

Baseball vs. Newbury College

4 p.m., Briggs Field

SCOREBOARD

Baseball	
Saturday, May 1	
vs. Trinity College	L 6-3
vs. Trinity College	W 7-2
Sunday, May 2	
vs. Worcester St. College	W 7-3
Men’s Lacrosse	
Saturday, May 1	
vs. Clark University	W 10-7
Women’s Lacrosse	
Saturday, May 1	
at Babson College	L 16-7
Men’s Track and Field	
Saturdady, May 1	
New England Division III Championship	2nd of 25
Women’s Track and Field	
Saturdady, May 1	
New England Division III Championship	2nd of 25

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The Sloan (Course 15) Course Bidding System (Sloanbid) Bidding Dates for Fall, 2010 Courses

<https://sloanbid.mit.edu>

First time logging in? Use your MIT ID as both your log in and password. Follow instructions on the site to change your password or retrieve lost passwords. Once logged in, make sure and check that your information (i.e. program of study and graduation date) is correct.

Institute-wide bidding for Sloan (Course 15) subjects\*:

Opens 9:00 a.m., Thursday, May 13

Closes 5:00 p.m., Thursday, May 20

Waitlist Round for closed Sloan (Course 15) subjects:

Opens 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, July 13

Closes 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 27

Section Swap Round for changing sections of pre-enrolled Sloan (Course 15) subjects:

Opens 9:00 a.m., Friday, July 30

Closes 5:00 p.m., Friday, August 6

Please contact Scott Alessandro, [salessan@mit.edu](mailto:salessan@mit.edu), if you have questions regarding Sloan (Course 15) Course Bidding.

Successful bids will appear on your Registration Form on September 7 and will be posted on the bidding website as of July 13 -- write down your password to check results!

\*For 15.011, 15.075, 15.279, 15.301, 15.305, 15.310, 15.501, 15.516, and 15.668, you can sign up directly through WebSIS starting May 3rd. It is not necessary to bid for these courses.